

**Real Voices, Real Choices**  
**Conference Planning Committee Meeting**  
**Minutes**  
**May 27, 2009**

**Welcome and Introductions**

Present: Robert Qualls, David Helling, Sharon Britten, Jan Wagler, Justin, Helen Minth, Judie Didriksen, and Jennifer Nugent, and Marge Parrish

Absent: Manfred Leonhard, Anita Morrison, and Mark Ohrenberg

Staff Present: Cheryl Eads, Carol Dickneite, and Leigh Gibson

**Coalition Presentation:**

The Coalition of Mental Health Centers agreed to allow someone from the Consumer Conference Planning Committee to speak about the conference at the meeting of the Program Directors at noon. Robert Qualls volunteered to do the presentation. He took copies of the brochures with him. Upon his return, Robert reported the presentation went well. Many members of the group said they were aware of the conference, and some asked questions. Robert encouraged them to support consumers attending by assisting with registration fees or travel costs.

**Enrollment Update**

Thus far, 73 people have sent in registration forms and paid their fees. There has been some indication that consumers are confused about whether they are responsible for paying for their hotel rooms. Questions about this issue have come in to Carol Dickneite via telephone as well as to Leigh Gibson when she has done presentations about the conference to consumers and providers. Carol and Leigh will continue to address this question as it arises, but it would be helpful if committee could clarify this issue should someone ask them about it.

## **Registration Fees for Consumers who live in Mental Health Facilities**

Leigh reported that consumers at Fulton State Hospital may be unable to attend if they are required to pay the full \$65.00 registration fee. They have little discretionary income because they are not eligible for SSD and SSI due to their commitment status. Also, they would only attend the sessions on Monday because of security concerns and prohibitive staff costs. Approximately ten members of the RESPECT Institute attended last year's summit, and they would really like to attend the conference. The committee discussed the situation and decided to reduce but not to eliminate the fee.

## **Pillows of Unrest**

Marty Martin, COO of Fulton State Hospital, contacted Leigh to see if there would be any interest in having a *Pillows of Unrest Display* at the conference. Marty saw a presentation about this program by Mark Marquit, Director of the Project of National Artists for Mental Health while she was at a conference in Oklahoma, and she was so impressed with it that she is going to institute it at Fulton. Sharon Britten explained that consumers use fabric markers to illustrate their lives a pillowcase. The activity facilitator asks consumers to think about the statement "If pillows could talk, they would tell the story of our struggles" before they start drawing on the pillowcases. The pictures that result reflect issues of stigma and the journey to recovery. The finished pillows are displayed on a clothesline.

The committee discussed this concept and agreed that it would be a good addition to the conference. We could display the pillowcases made at Fulton in the art room and possibly the main meeting room of the conference. The question came up as to whether there would be anything to attach a clothesline to in the meeting rooms. The committee decided to wait until the visit to Tan-Tar-A in July to decide how to set up the display.

The committee discussed describing the project to the conference at large and offering the necessary supplies in the art room so conference attendees could design their own pillows. Everyone thought that sounded like a good idea if we could locate pillows and paints for the project at a reasonable price. Jan Wagler said she could try to have fabric paints donated since the art supplies she already received will only work on paper. Carol will find out whether hospitals might donate pillowcases. If not, she will look for reasonably priced ones. The committee agreed to discuss the project next month since that would give Jan and Carol an opportunity to locate the necessary supplies.

## **July Committee Meeting**

The July committee meeting will take place on Monday, July 6, at Tan-Tar-A to allow the group an opportunity to visit the facility. Dennis Bommell, the event planning specialist assigned to this conference, will meet us at 10:30 to lead the tour and to answer any questions the committee has. Since most members of the committee would spend the night prior to the meeting in Jefferson City, the group discussed carpooling to Lake Ozark. Since no personal vehicle would be large enough, Carol will try to reserve two state vans. It takes about an hour and fifteen minutes to get to the hotel, so the group will need to leave by 9:00 that morning.

## **Committee Assignments**

Committee members reported on conference related activities they had undertaken during the past month. David Helling appeared on the Mental Images television show, and he has promoted registration. Marge Parrish has promoted registration at the Self-Help Center. She also contacted a person who works for a drug company to ask for a donation. The individual referred Marge to a website that described the procedures to follow to request a donation. It did not appear that the conference met any of the criteria to receive funds through any of the company's programs. Marge forwarded the information to Leigh and Debra Walker since other Missouri Mental Health Fund activities might qualify. Marge also reported that she would contact a doctor she knows to see if he will donate a gift certificate for participation in his smoking cessation program. Marge also plans to put together a basket.

Robert has solicited names of individuals who would be good candidates to participate on the Real Voices – Successful Choices panel. He asked whether the committee thought it would be important to ask new people to participate. The committee encouraged him seek new people. He has asked key people for the names of three people as candidates. He will start with that group of twelve and narrow it down by the time of the conference. He plans to invite six individuals to serve on the panel. Robert mentioned the name of an individual and asked whether that person would be a good representative of people who have substance abuse problems. The group approved of the choice. Marge gave the name of someone she thought might be suitable. Jennifer Nugent said she has several suggestions to forward to Robert.

Helen Minth has promoted registration vigorously. The DBSA of St. Louis Board of Directors has agreed to send ten people from the Empowerment Center to the conference. Helen has also arranged for a friend of hers to donate a couple of gift baskets. Judy Didriksen has made six contacts soliciting prizes. She also worked with

MSRN to send out additional notices about the conference. Justin Idleburg has contacted Walgreens to see if they will make a donation or provide a prize.

Jan wrote a blog entry, but it has yet appeared on the website. Leigh let the committee know that Lois did not realize an entry was ready, but she will post it now that she knows one is there. Jan will continue to write entries. Jan received the art supplies from Bradburn's. She will also try to get donations of fabric paints to use with the pillowcases. She has also offered to donate some of the note cards she makes for one of the prize baskets. Jan has been in contact with Jeanne Henry to discuss setting up interviews about the conference on radio shows. Committee members who would like to participate in an interview or do other publicity on the radio should coordinate with Jan.

Carol has contacted the Habilitation Centers to see if they would provide door prizes. Higginsville and Marshall have each agreed to provide one. Carol has also helped Gayle Bluebird make reservations from Gainesville, Florida to St. Louis, Missouri. She will arrive during the afternoon of Saturday, August 22. Helen will bring her to the conference on Sunday. Carol also displayed the insulated lunch bag and water bottle consumers will receive as gift. She also passed around a sample meal ticket for the committee to review. The group liked it. Carol will make up different colored tickets for each meal.

Leigh checked with the housing section to see if they could speak at the conference. They said they would help out, but expected Leigh to put the presentation together for them. Since she did not have the time or expertise to write a proposal, one was not submitted. Leigh has talked to the divisions about publicizing the conference to increase registrations. She spoke to the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Planning Council as well as the Directors of Regional Centers and the Superintendents of the Habilitation Centers. Leigh also contacted Carol Evans who developed the survey used at the summit last year to see if she would help prepare one this year. Carol agreed to help, but she must wait until after the committee finalizes the content of the workshops to start work on it.

## **Proposals for Presentations**

Helen received twenty-seven proposals from consumers and professionals. Leigh had prepared packets of proposals categorized by their content. The committee decided to evaluate only those proposals received by the deadline for presentation at the conference. The group thoroughly discussed each proposal, selected twelve of them for presentation at the conference, and prepared a tentative agenda. The titles of the proposals selected and when they are scheduled during the conference appear below:

Monday:

- *5 Stages of Recovery* – Track A at 10:00 AM
- *Knowledge is Power for Medication Decisions* – Track B at 10:00 AM
- *Suicide Intervention for Everyone* – Track B at 11:00 AM
- *Well-being through Peer Support: the Missouri COSP* – Track B at 11:00 AM
- *RESPECT Institute* – Track A at 1:30 PM
- *Moving from Like to Love: Being Safe and Happy in Relationships* – Track B at 1:30 PM
- *Recovery through Support, Education and Stigma Reduction: NAMI Signature Programs* – Track A at 2:30 PM
- *Missouri Youth Leadership Forum* – Track B at 2:30 PM
- *Letting Go of Labels* – Track A at 3:30 PM
- *My Money, My Budget, My Choice* – Track B at 3:30 PM

Tuesday:

- *ScrapAbilities and Self-determination* – Track A at 9:45 AM
- *Writing for Well-being* – Track B at 9:45 AM

The committee also discussed other aspects of the agenda. Dinner on Sunday was rescheduled. It will now start at 5:30 PM. The group also decided to move Austin Montague's keynote presentation on *Principles of the Twelve Step Approach to Living Daily Life* from 6:30 PM Sunday evening to 8:45 AM on Tuesday. The dramatic reading entitled *Voices of Depression* will now appear in the 6:30 slot after dinner on Sunday.

The keynote presentation Mark Ohrenberg has located three people to do the keynote presentation regarding developmental disabilities at 9:00 AM on Monday. Lunch starts at noon, and the hour-long Real Voices- Successful Voices panel moderated by Robert will take place at 12:30 PM. Dinner will start at 5:30 PM. Gayle Bluebird will do her keynote presentation starting at 6:30 PM. Justin Idleburg will do his youth-oriented presentation starting at 8:00 PM. Since the *Voices of Depression* dramatic reading, Gale Bluebird's keynote, and the presentation by Justin all have a themes related to mental illness, the group decided to drop Manfred's speech from the agenda. If he is interested, Manfred could assist with introductions or other announcements during the conference.

Austin's keynote speech will take place at 8:45 AM on Tuesday. Benton Goon will facilitate a discussion that will allow consumers to reflect upon the conference and make recommendations regarding the format and content of future conferences. The conference will close with drawings for door prizes and closing comments by Keith Schafer.